

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, 6th/19th August 2017, the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord was celebrated at the Patriarchate.

During this Feast, the Church commemorates the event that a little while before His Passion on the Cross, the Lord went up on Mount Tabor with the distinguished disciples, Peter, James and John and made them participants and witnesses of His glory, His pre-eternal uncreated light, in order to prepare them for His resurrection, through the divine vision where they saw Him and heard the voice of the Father witnessing, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him".

1. On Mount Tabor

Therein, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated Vespers in the evening and the outdoor midnight Vigil, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Timotheos of Bozra, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Ieronymos of Mouanza in Tanzania of the Alexandria Patriarchate and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Theodosios of New Siberia of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Prokopios of Tanagra, with the participation in prayer of a great number of visiting Hieromonks and Priests of other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Demetrios; singing were, Fr. George on the right and the Acre choir led by Archimandrite Philotheos on the left, with the participation of an innumerate congregation of faithful from Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Cyprus and

locals from the Galilee area.

Before the Holy Communion and the blessing of the grapes, His Beatitude preached the divine word to this noble congregation as follows:

“Christ took Peter, James, and John, into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: this is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him”.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The One Who was transfigured on this Holy Mount of Tabor in front of His Disciples and Apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in order to celebrate this great and salvific event of the manifestation of the unapproachable light of God’s glory.

The event of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ took place just before his passion on the Cross and His resurrection. The holy evangelists and Apostles describe precisely the experience they had, and of which they became eye and ear witnesses. “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” St. Peter says (2 Peter 1:16).

And the “majesty” of the Lord is nothing but the glory of the Only Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. This was confirmed by the voice that came from God the Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard – Peter says – when we

were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:17-18).

This voice was heard from heaven during both the baptism in the river Jordan and the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and it was one of the strongest witnesses of all that ever came from heaven to earth. Through this voice God the Father expressed His outmost well-pleasing to the Messiah Christ, and through Him to us who have been inoculated in His mystical body, namely the Church. Moreover, the voice that came through the bright cloud exhorts the disciples to obey Him, the beloved Son of God; "hear ye him" (Mat. 17:5).

This divine exhortation "hear ye him", my dear brothers, is addressed also to us, especially on this celebrated feast, as the hymn writer says: "Ye who love to see and hear the things transcending the mind of man, let us mystically look on Christ: He shineth forth lightning-like with divine effulgence. Let us also hearken unto His Father's holy voice as it proclaimeth Him His beloved Son, Who on the Mount of Tabor shed His light upon man's infirmity and hath poured forth in mighty streams His enlightenment for our souls".

The bright cloud that overshadowed the disciples as well as the voice that came through it (Mat. 17:5), are the signs and the way by which God is being revealed, as St. Chrysostom preaches: "This is how God always appears. Cloud and mist surround Him", according to the psalmist (97:2), while according to Zigavinos: "God is placed on a cloud" and as the psalmist says again: "Who maketh the cloud his chariot" (Psalms 104:3). And this is so because God is uncreated light and therefore unapproachable. If God had not become human like us, who would have been able to see the unspeakable glory of God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches, quoting St. Paul (1 Tim. 6:16).

The chosen ones of the Apostles and disciples of Christ, Peter, James and John, saw the unapproachable light of divinity only by a little and not clearly, since they "were

changed with a divine ecstasy”, as the hymn writer says: “When the foremost Apostles saw the uncontainable flood of Thy light upon the Mount of the Transfiguration, O beginningless Christ, and Thy Godhead unto which no man may approach, they were changed with a divine ecstasy”

And we, my dear brothers, who stand on this Holy Mount of Tabor, let us entreat our God and Saviour Christ, that along with the Prophets Moses the seer of God and Elias the fiery charioteer and the Holy Apostles Peter, James and John, are deemed worthy of the glory of His unapproachable light, by the intercessions of our Lady the Most Blessed Theotokos. Amen.”

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the morning of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the participation of many Orthodox faithful of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Galilee and Acre.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Hilarion offered a meal to the Patriarchal and Episcopal Entourages.

2. At the Theotokos' Tomb

Likewise, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Theotokos' Tomb according to the Status Quo of worship. It was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, at the singing the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the participation of a noble congregation.

The Hegoumen of the Theotokos' Tomb Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to all present.

3. Ramalla

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramalla, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with a numerous participation of the Ramalla Community Orthodox Congregation.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaction offered the Episcopal entourage a meal at a town restaurant.

From Secretariat-General

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